

I note in docket# 02-230 that the FCC seeks "comment on whether quality digital programming is now being withheld because of concerns over the lack of digital broadcast copy protection."

Good question! Let me answer that question with a question.

Has the FCC taken the time to price digital TVs?

When I shopped for a digital TV in Jan, 2001, a small set (say 27-30 inches) was priced at \$2000. Larger screens weighed in at an eye popping \$4000 and up. I don't believe these prices included the cost of an accompanying theater sound system required to take advantage of HDTV's superior audio capabilities. Since my cable company (AT&T) did not provide HDTV channels, there was no way on earth that I'd consider that kind of cash outlay for ZERO programming. And why is there no programming? Simple: the broadcast networks have noticed that digital TVs are not selling well. In short, this is a chicken and egg situation.

If the consumer can't afford the technology, they won't buy the HDTV sets. If consumers won't buy the sets, the networks won't produce a costlier medium (digital broadcast).

The broadcast flag is a red herring. Until HDTV sets are affordable, digital broadcasts are a nonstarter. Period.

And note that 11 months later (12/2002), my cable provider still does not offer any digital programming to its cable subscribers. But that won't stop my cable provider from raising rates 8% in January.